



Iowa Cancer Consortium

Dear fellow Iowans,

Words cannot express what an honor it is to have been elected as the new President of the Iowa Cancer Consortium and to succeed Dr. George Weiner in this role. In my eight years on the board, it has been remarkable to watch the organization's growth and impact in its effort to reduce the burden of cancer in Iowa. The growth is evident in the release of the 2023-2027 Iowa Cancer Plan, a dynamic and comprehensive plan which includes targets and measures spanning the full spectrum of cancer prevention and control – and above all else, health equity.

While excellent strides to reduce the burden of cancer among Iowans have been taken, it is also important to recognize where we must do more. Iowa is fortunate to have a top-notch statewide cancer registry, the Iowa Cancer Registry, to help identify areas of opportunity:

- Iowa is currently ranked #2 nationally in overall cancer incidence (new cancer diagnoses) and is the only state in the country that experienced a significant increase in cancer incidence from 2015-2019.
- While Iowa lands in the 'middle of the pack' when it comes to our ranking for cancer mortality (deaths), we consistently rank among the states with the highest cancer mortality among our Black population.
- Iowa has the highest rate of oral cavity and pharynx (head and neck) cancer in the country, which is associated with modifiable risk factors such as HPV infection, tobacco and alcohol use.
- The pandemic further highlighted some of our challenges including workforce burnout, turnover and shortages, as well as decreased screening and vaccination rates that have important implications for Iowa's cancer burden.

It will take the efforts of many to address the major risk factors impacting Iowa's cancer incidence rates and poor cancer outcomes. This includes promoting best-practices and addressing gaps in cancer prevention (use of tobacco/nicotine, radon, immunizations, access to healthy food, physical activity) and early-detection. Fortunately, Iowans have a strong culture of caring about each other and take great pride in helping their communities.

Furthermore, organizations like the Iowa Cancer Consortium have joined together to strengthen networks and develop a robust plan for how to reduce rates of new cancer cases, find cancer earlier (when it can be more effectively treated), facilitate access to comprehensive cancer treatment, promote participation in research that could lead to better survival and quality of life outcomes, and bring Iowans together to reduce the burden of cancer for all of us.

Please join us,

Mary Charlton, PhD
President, Board of Directors, Iowa Cancer Consortium